

the depth of wings was rather great and the flight similar to that of the Lapwing and other plovers. Bill about one inch long. I have no record of tail length, so assume that it was short. The bird was gone next day."

A rough sketch of the feeding bird, as seen from behind, shows the wing tips crossing each other and extending beyond the tail. A sketch of the bird in profile is reproduced here. In a subsequent letter, Mr Smith told us that the bird was wading in the water (which explains his failure to record details of the feet).

It was soon evident to us that this was no resident Australian bird or regular visitor. We therefore searched the literature for descriptions of moderately large Asian aquatic birds. Only one species fitted Mr. Smith's sketches and description, namely the non-breeding form of the Pheasant-tailed Jacana, *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, which ranges from Pakistan east through southern China and Malaya to Formosa, the Philippines and Java.

We sent a photocopy of Mr. Smith's letter and sketches to Mr. John Darnell of Goldsworthy for his opinion on the bird. Mr. Darnell, an expert on south-east Asian birds, immediately recognised the bird and telephoned us to confirm our identification.

Meanwhile we had sent similar photocopies to the British Museum (Natural History) for checking directly against specimens of *Hydrophasianus*. On 31 January 1975, Mr. Peter Colston replied, "I have looked at the skins in the collection and it fits and compares very well with a female collected by H. Whistler in February 1936 from the Chanda Dist., Central Prov., India . . . I have also looked through the waders, i.e. lapwings etc. and Wilson's Phalarope, but none agree."

Great numbers of birds from northern Asia visit Western Australia every summer. Visitors from subtropical and tropical Asia, however, are a very rare category, which hitherto included only the Malay Banded Crake (*Rallina fasciata*) and the Blue-winged Pitta (*Pitta moluccensis*). To these we can now add the Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

According to Hugh Whistler (*Popular Handbook of Indian Birds*) the Pheasant-tailed Jacana is similar to other members of the Jacanidae in favouring waters with floating vegetation, but it is "more ready to frequent open water, and more accustomed to wander to flood water, streams, and similar spots free of weeds." It is therefore not so surprising to find this species in a region that is completely lacking in habitat suitable for its relative, the Australian Lotus-bird.

When breeding the Pheasant-tailed Jacana is a very beautiful bird. It then acquires tail plumes half a metre long, and the body becomes glossy chocolate brown.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

The Black Tern near Perth.—The Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) does not appear to be unquestionably admitted as a member of the Australian avifauna (cf. Serventy *et al.*, *The Handbook of Australian Sea-Birds*, 1971: 206). However I am satisfied I observed an individual resting on a partly submerged post in Lake Joondalup on December 31, 1973.

The bird was in winter plumage and had the following characteristics: A small marsh tern having the forehead, neck and underparts white with a greyish patch on the side of the breast in front of the wing. The bill was black and the legs red. The back and wings were slate grey. The flight was typically buoyant in character. The bird allowed a very close approach but once disturbed it flew off and was not observed to feed.

The species is readily distinguished in its winter plumage from all sea terns by its distinctive "bat-like" flight and greyish black upper parts. The only species with which it could be readily confused is the White-

winged Black Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*). The latter has no dark patch on the side of the breast, a paler rump and tail and brighter reddish legs.

I am well acquainted with this species in winter plumage. I have frequently observed it as an autumn migrant in England—visiting estuaries, brackish and fresh-water lagoons and marshes, especially on the east coast—during its movement southward from its breeding haunts in Northern Europe, e.g. Denmark, Germany, Holland, etc., to its winter quarters in Africa. This little marsh tern was an extremely common winter visitor to Lagos, Nigeria, where I spent two years.

—SYDNEY JACOBS, Nedlands.

Cockatiel in the Wheatbelt.—As a contribution to information on the recent spread, or invasion, of the Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) I offer the following observations. On August 31, 1974 on Mr Roger Forte's farm at Latham I observed 7 birds. In about 30 years of observing the birds in the area Mr Forte had never seen this species before. At Merredin I observed 10 birds on February 6 and 40 birds on February 22, 1975. Mr Paddy Crook, a farmer who is keenly interested in the local wildlife, having lived most of his life in the district (about 40 years) had never seen the Cockatiel previously until this month (February, 1975).

—GREG LINSTED, Merredin.

A Recent Breeding Record of *Charadrius melanops* in the Metropolitan Area.—During an excursion to Lake Herdsman on December 1, 1974, two adult Black-fronted Dotterels, *Charadrius melanops*, were observed. I followed them into the corner of a mudflat. One bird was always running away from me, then squatting down, spreading the tail and lowering both wings. The matter became more interesting now and I tried to spot a nest or fledglings. Soon after, only 1 metre away from me, I discovered the young dotterels. Being precocial, the legs were the most conspicuous feature of the half-thumb sized birds. The tarsus measured 26 mm, while the centre toes were 13 mm. Measurements of the beak and wing were 9 mm and 14 mm respectively.

—OTTO MUELLER, Wembley.

A Further Record of Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*, in the South West.—On November 27, 1973, at Benger Swamp, I observed a slender egret with black bill, black legs and two plumes extending back horizontally from the nape. This I supposed must be a Little Egret although it did not appear to be obviously smaller than the White Egrets, *Egretta alba* which were frequent though none was close enough to serve as a 'yardstick'.

I returned to Benger Swamp on December 4, 1973 and spent some time examining egrets which appeared 'under-sized' without conclusive results until I located a typical Little Egret in breeding plumage standing in a group of resting White-faced Herons, *Ardea novaehollandiae*. This bird I viewed in a good light with X 8 binoculars and X 20 telescope at distances down to c. 60 m. Bill, legs and, I think, feet, were black. The bird appeared somewhat smaller than the herons, both resting and in flight. Its rate of wing beat was similar to that of the herons from which it separated when flushed.

It is just possible that there may have been more than one Little Egret present. It seemed to me that the nape plumes of the second bird identified were longer and more tapering than those of the first, and it is by no means certain that all my apparently 'undersized' egrets were one and the same.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Harvey.